

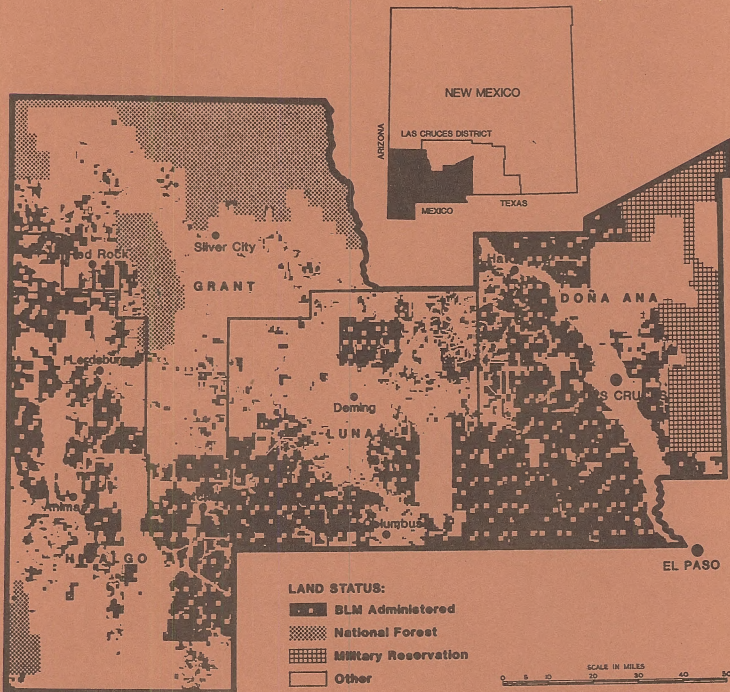


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# CRUCES/LORDSBURG

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO



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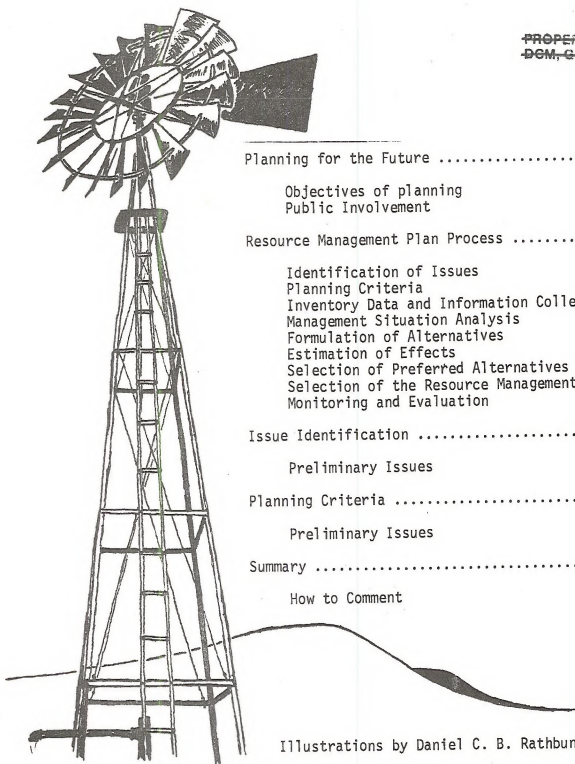
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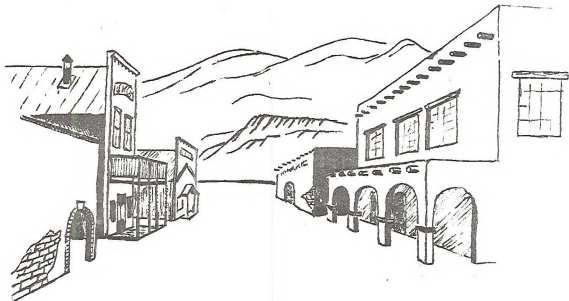
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Illustrations by Daniel C. B. Rathbun







## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This booklet contains a brief overview of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process and our first invitation for comments and suggestions on preliminary issues and planning criteria.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has begun a long range planning process. Our goal is to prepare a Resource Management Plan for approximately 2.9 million acres of BLM administered surface and 3.8 million acres of Federal mineral ownership in Dona Ana, Luna, Hidalgo and Grant Counties. This long range plan will direct BLM programs and management practices throughout the coming decade. The final document is scheduled for completion in 1984.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579), or FLPMA, is Congress' basic guidance to the Bureau on how to manage the 470 million acres of public lands under its jurisdiction. One portion of that law (section 202) directs the Secretary of Interior and the Bureau to develop, maintain, and as necessary, revise land use plans which will provide for the use of public land.

Regulations finalized in August of 1979 established a single planning process that the BLM will use in preparing management plans. These regulations were developed from FLPMA and from the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.



## OBJECTIVES OF PLANNING

There are two main objectives of planning. The first objective is to improve decisions. We hope to improve decisions through involvement of the public and other governmental units, using the best available data and a thorough analysis of the alternatives. The second objective of planning is to guide and control future management actions as well as subsequent, more site specific, levels of planning.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is essential to the success of the RMP.

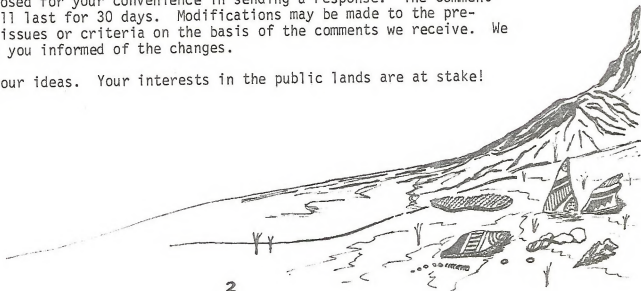
There are five points in which you will have the opportunity for comment, participation or review, however, information is welcome any time:

- General notice at the outset of the process
- Notice inviting comment on the planning criteria
- Publication of the Draft Plan
- Publication of the Final Plan
- Any significant change as a result of an action on a protest

Regulation provides that protests to an approved RMP may be raised only by those persons who participated in the planning process and only concerning the specific issues which were commented on at the time (43 CFR 1601.6-1 (d)). Therefore, it is important that your comments be in written form so we may fully document, analyze and use your ideas.

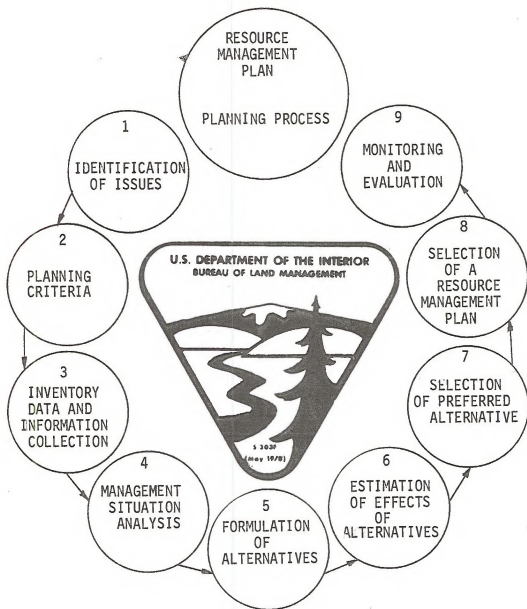
We hope that you will look at the preliminary issues and planning criteria carefully and critically and use the space for comment provided to give us the benefit of your opinions and advice. An envelope has been enclosed for your convenience in sending a response. The comment period will last for 30 days. Modifications may be made to the preliminary issues or criteria on the basis of the comments we receive. We will keep you informed of the changes.

We need your ideas. Your interests in the public lands are at stake!



# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the new planning process followed by the Bureau of Land Management as a result of the planning requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The RMP is made up of nine basic steps. These steps are illustrated below.



## IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

At the onset of the planning process, issues are identified. This action is repeated as necessary. An issue can be any significant problem, need, concern or opportunity which will lead to an action or result in an allocation of resources between conflicting or alternative uses. The issues are the focal point of the RMP. Who identifies potential issues? The public, state and local governments, other Federal agencies and Indian Tribes all provide input to the final selection.

## PLANNING CRITERIA

This step is based on the issues identified. Planning criteria guide the development of the plan by setting the standards for data collection, establishing alternatives to be examined and selecting the preferred alternative and final plan. Planning criteria insure that the plan is tailored to the issues and that unnecessary collection and analysis of data are avoided. They are revised as needed throughout the four year process.

## INVENTORY DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTION

Information appropriate to prepare the RMP will be collected or assembled. The issues and criteria determine what kind and how much information will be collected.

## MANAGEMENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

This is primarily a capability analysis. The management situation will be described and analyzed to determine the capability of the resources to respond to the issues. Based on a description of the geographic area and existing management practices and problems, it will identify and analyze opportunities to meet the needs of the issues.

## FORMULATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Several complete reasonable resource management alternatives will be formulated. One will be a "no action alternative", which means continuing the present level of resource use. The other alternatives will provide a range of choices from resource protection to resource production.



## ESTIMATION OF EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES

The social, economic, physical, biological and environmental effects of implementing each alternative will be estimated and displayed. Estimation of the effects or impacts will be consistent with requirements of the new Council on Environmental Quality regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

## SELECTION OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

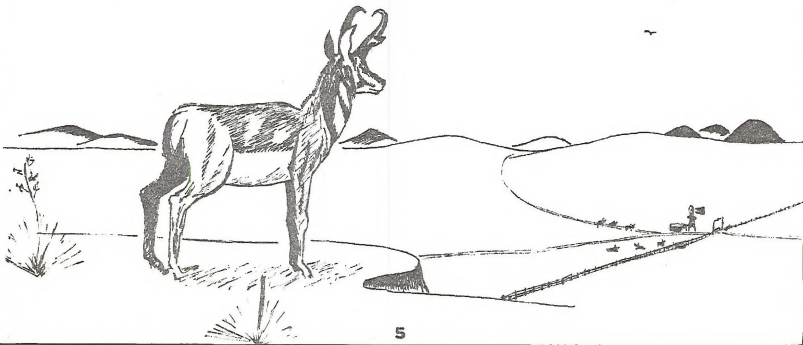
This step will identify the preferred alternative for the draft plan. The District Manager will make the selection by evaluating which alternative best fits the planning criteria. A 90-day review and comment period will follow the publication of the Draft.

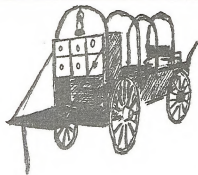
## SELECTION OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

After comments on the draft plan have been evaluated, a final plan will be prepared. For the selection of the final RMP, the District Manager will be able to draw on any combination of parts which were shown in the proposed plan and alternatives. His decision will then be incorporated into the final RMP.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation occur after the plan is approved; they are considered part of the planning process. The approved plan will prescribe standards and intervals for monitoring. The standards and intervals are based on the sensitivity of the resource to the impacts as a result of the decision involved.





# ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Issue identification is the first step in the RMP process. Issues are generally understood to be significant problems, needs, concerns or opportunities which will eventually lead to an action or result in an allocation of resources between conflicting or alternative uses. Issues can be identified by the public, other Federal Agencies, State and local governments, Indian Tribes, and BLM manager. After all tentative issues have been identified, the District Manager selects the topics to be addressed as issues in the RMP process. These issues will become the center or focal point for the rest of the plan.

## PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Initially issues were identified by the Las Cruces District Office Management. They include mandatory (legal or policy) management actions and actual or foreseeable resource conflicts. These have been defined as physical, biological, ecological or technical needs, restraints or opportunities. We have tried to limit our preliminary identification of issues to those topics over which BLM has jurisdiction. As an example, since the New Mexico State Engineer controls the adjudication of water in the Mesilla Valley, the water dispute between New Mexico and Texas would not be an issue in the BLM planning.

Other areas we did not consider topics to be addressed in the plan are those subjects already resolved through previous plans or Environmental Impact Statements. For example, availability of public land for city expansion has been analyzed, and decisions have been made in previous plans. Therefore, it would not be an issue in this RMP.

In development of preliminary issues, the District Advisory Council was consulted to further prioritize topics to be considered. The Council is made up of citizens representing different user groups within the Las Cruces District.

Below is a list of preliminary issues with brief descriptions. After each, a space for your response is provided. We ask that you comment on each. Whether you agree, disagree or want to add your own, please give any reasons or justification so that we may be responsive to your needs.

### **Vegetation Allocations**

Vegetation allocation for livestock, wildlife and watershed, as required by BLM policy, will be considered in the planning process. Range improvements and management intensity will be a consideration in this topic. Vegetation allocation is of management concern throughout the planning area. However, a vegetation allocation and a program to monitor actual grazing use, forage utilization, rainfall and range condition will be in effect for those allotments already covered in a Grazing Environmental Impact Statement.

Comments or Suggestion:

### **Public Access**

Public access is concerned with the areas of public land having significant resource or recreation value for which there is high demand and no legal public access. This management concern is of planning significance area wide.

Comments or Suggestions:



## Management Of Wildlife Habitat

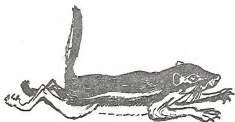
Management of wildlife habitat is a topic geared toward eliminating habitat conditions currently limiting wildlife populations with priority going to big game, upland game (i.e., quail, dove...), raptors (i.e., birds of prey), and waterfowl. The areas of primary management concern are the Florida, Big Hatchet, Alamo Hueco and Southern Peloncillo Mountains.

Comments or Suggestions:

## Off-Road Vehicle Designation

BLM policy requires the designation of all public lands as "open", "closed" or "limited" to off-road vehicle (ORV) use. ORV designation is a management concern throughout the planning area. Many recreationists desire to use public land because private and state lands are usually closed to ORV activities. Since designations apply to all user groups, ORV designation may limit access by restricting cross country travel.

Comments or Suggestions:



### Wilderness Recommendations

To carry out the wilderness mandate of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, each Wilderness Study Area (WSA) will be studied through the planning process. The end result of the wilderness studies will be recommendations to Congress on the suitability or unsuitability of a WSA for designation as wilderness.

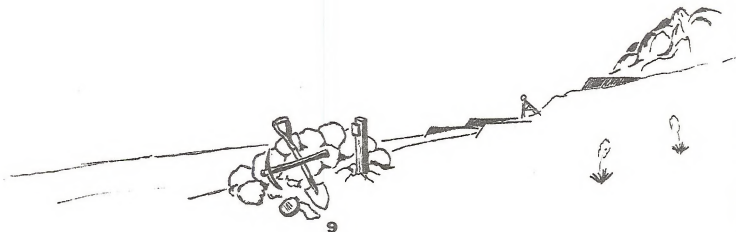
Fifteen WSA's have been identified in the planning areas with a total acreage of 355,474. All possible uses of the WSA's (i.e., grazing, wildlife, mineral development, wilderness) will be evaluated to determine the highest and best uses of the areas.

Comments or Suggestions:

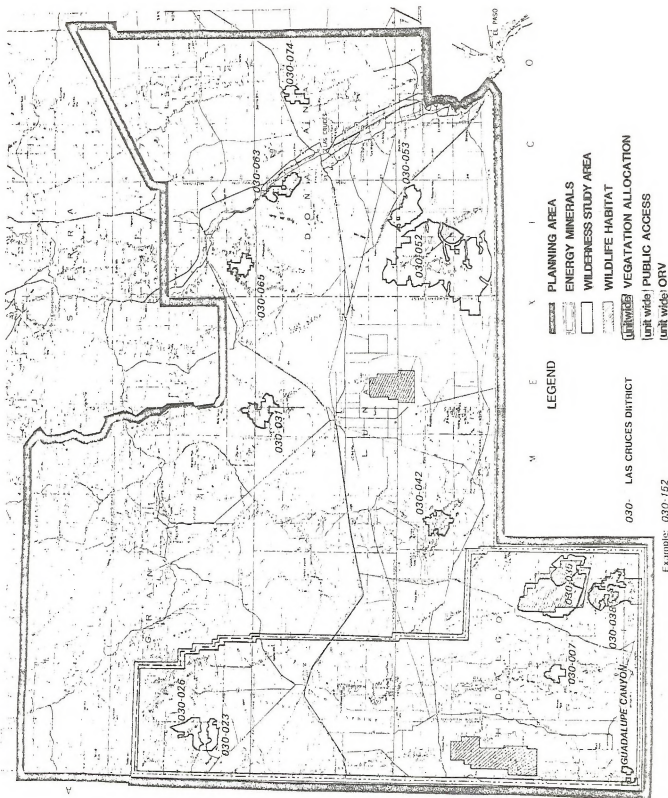
### Energy Minerals

Energy minerals, such as oil and gas, as a topic for planning involve the potential exploration and development of those areas which can be leased. The intensity of the energy minerals issue is high to the extent that other programs are affected. This subject, through planning, would afford the opportunity to resolve the foreseeable conflicts between alternative uses. The leases are currently being stipulated with protection requirements which vary from no surface occupancy to restrictions during certain times of the year. The most significant conflicts appear to be located in Hidalgo County.

Comments or Suggestion:



# PRELIMINARY ISSUE AREAS





# PLANNING CRITERIA

We have defined planning criteria as guidelines, tests, measures, a format to follow, standards in matters of judgement, the "how to", or "how well we have to" do each part of the plan.

The purposes of criteria are to guide the development of the plan, tailor the plan to the issues, establish requirements and to avoid unnecessary collection and analysis of data.

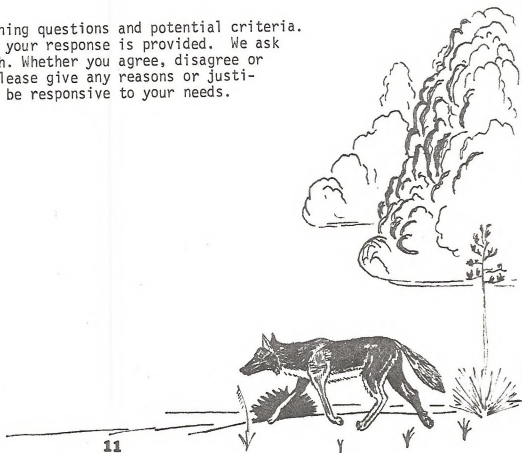
## PRELIMINARY CRITERIA

For each preliminary issue identified, we have asked planning questions and tried to develop standards within which we intend to answer the questions.

These standards, or planning criteria, are summarized below for each of the planning questions. Planning criteria may be the legal, policy or regulatory constraints that direct or limit our ability to resolve the issues or they may be constraints imposed as a result of public input or through coordination with other Federal agencies and local governments and Indian Tribes.

In any case, the planning criteria listed below, associated with each preliminary issue identified, will be used to guide the inventory and analysis of data and to establish proposed levels of resource production or resource protection when the various alternatives are developed. They will also assist the BLM in selecting the preferred alternative and in making the resource management decisions that will result in the final plan.

Below is a list of planning questions and potential criteria. After each, a space for your response is provided. We ask that you comment on each. Whether you agree, disagree or want to add your own, please give any reasons or justification so that we may be responsive to your needs.



## Vegetation Allocation

How much forage can and should be allocated for livestock, wildlife and watershed protection? What are the proper numbers? Are there areas that can be made suitable for grazing through range improvement? Are there land treatments that will improve range conditions? What is the proper intensity of management?

- Identify range sites and their current condition
- Determine actual use, degree of utilization and utilization patterns
- Identify which allotments do or do not require a change in use levels
- Identify those allotments where a change in management practices might result in helping to meet management objectives
- Map existing range improvements
- Determine precipitation patterns and amounts
- Determine water quantity needed and water needs for livestock & wildlife
- Identify which areas offer the best opportunities for land treatments or range improvements
- Determine socio-economic conditions and trends
- Develop stipulations needed for environmental protection

What should be measured in estimating the effects that various alternatives would have on the environment?

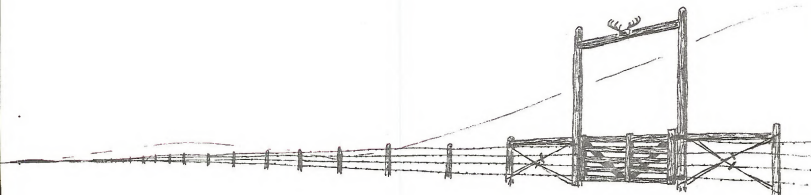
- Social values and beliefs
- Local and regional economy
- Range operator & hunters
- Dependency of the livestock industry on the public lands
- Water quantity
- Sediment production and overland flow
- Existing range improvements
- Use patterns
- Wildlife habitat
- Plant communities

To the extent possible, what factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually the final RMP?

- Allocation of forage for livestock to meet existing grazing preference
- Allocation of forage for existing populations of big game animals (antelope, deer, bighorn, javalina)
- Design of potential land treatments to increase forage where existing demand cannot be met through current production and where potential exists
- Reservation of an average of one half of the current year's growth of forage plants
- Reduction of soil erosions where it is occurring

- Convert potentially suitable range to suitable range through range improvements
- Improve range conditions and maintain a static or upward apparent trend where possible
- In areas where forage production is a limiting factor for wildlife, increase forage production through land treatments and management practice

Comments or Suggestion:



## Public Access

Are there areas of public land having significant resource values and/or for which there is a high demand, that do not have legal public access?

- Identify and prioritize areas of public land with significant resource values
- Identify and prioritize areas of public land for which there is a high public demand
- Evaluate the opportunities for and feasibility of providing legal public access to areas with significant resource values or high public demand

What should be measured in estimating effects that various alternatives would have on the environment?

- Social values and beliefs
- Local and regional economy
- Air quality
- Watershed
- Safety hazards
- Visual resources
- Open-space
- Existing use patterns
- Wildlife habitat
- Plant communities

What factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually the final RMP?

- To provide legal public access to those areas of public land having significant resource values and/or for which there is a high public demand

Comments or Suggestions:

## Management Of Wildlife Habitat

What are the limiting factors in the areas currently and potentially providing habitat for big game, upland game (i.e., quail, dove), raptors (i.e., birds of prey), and waterfowl? What can be done to improve habitat conditions?

- Determine the water distribution
- Determine the vegetative composition
- Determine range condition and trend
- Identify unique land features
- Determine soils, precipitation & existing range improvements
- Identify other resource uses
- Map big game populations and determine population index for small species
- Determine socio-economic conditions
- Determine which areas offer the best opportunities for meeting Wildlife Habitat Management goals through management practices, treatment, and improvements

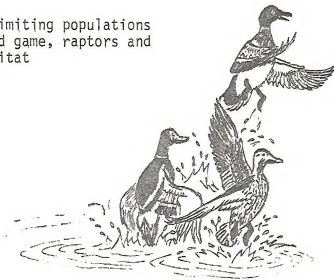
What should be measured in estimating the effects that various alternatives would have on the environment?

- Social values and beliefs
- Local, regional and state economy
- Ranch operators
- Dependency groups (oil & gas industry, minerals industry, state agencies)
- Watershed (soils)
- Water quality and quantities
- Visual resources
- Existing range improvements
- Existing uses
- Wildlife Habitat
- Plant communities

What factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually the final RMP?

- Increase the habitat diversity
- Eliminate habitat conditions currently limiting populations with priority going to big game, upland game, raptors and waterfowl and to maintain suitable habitat

Comments or Suggestions:



## Off-Road Vehicle Designation

Which areas should be designated as open, limited or closed to off-road vehicles?

- Map existing range improvements, hazard conditions, threatened or endangered plants or animals
- Identify existing uses
- Identify sensitive plant communities and wildlife habitat
- Identify any special designations or sensitive areas
- Map visual resource management classes
- Map all legal and physical access
- Determine susceptibility to soil compaction and erosion
- Determine socio-economic conditions and trends
- Determine which lands are suitable for open designation to provide recreation or to provide access for all resource programs
- Determine which lands need limitations
- Determine which lands need to be closed to off-road vehicles

What should be measured in estimating the effects that various alternatives would have on the environment?

- Social values and beliefs
- Local and regional economy
- Groups dependent on public land
- Watershed (soils)
- Existing improvements
- Existing uses
- Hazard areas
- Wildlife habitat
- Plant communities

What factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually the final RMP?

- To designate all the lands open to off-road vehicles
- To protect the resources on the public land, promote the safety of all the users and minimize conflicts among various uses on the public land

Comments or Suggestions:





### Wilderness Recommendations

Which of the 15 Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's), in whole or in part, meet or fail to meet suitability standards for designation as wilderness?

- Determine the current and potential location and level of use for each recreational activity within the WSA's
- By mineral commodity, determine the current location and level of mineral activity and the potential for development
- Determine if there are significant factors affecting manageability of the WSA's
- Determine if there are other agency plans that will affect the suitability of the area for wilderness designation
- Determine the area's suitability with regard to mandatory wilderness characteristics, special features or multiple use benefits
- Evaluate the diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System
- Identify areas where vehicular access may be denied but legal access is required
- Determine which lands are suitable for wilderness recommendation due to benefits and manageability
- Evaluate wilderness values; requisite characteristics, supplemental values, multiple resource benefits
- Determine which lands are non-suitable, have other resource uses, the significance of these uses, and alternate sites
- Determine the potential for designation as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's)

What should be measured in estimating the effects that the various alternatives would have on the environment?

- Social values and beliefs
- Local, regional and national economy
- Groups dependent on public lands
- Existing and future use patterns
- Existing improvements
- Open space
- Wilderness values
- Wildlife habitat

What factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually the final RMP?

- To identify and recommend to Congress for return to multiple use management those areas that are unsuitable for wilderness designation
- To identify and recommend to Congress those areas that are suitable for wilderness designation

Comments or Suggestions:

## Energy Minerals

Which areas can be leased for energy minerals exploration and development with no additional stipulation other than those specified under the notice of intent to conduct exploration and applications for permit to drill?

- Identify soil types, ground water tables and existing improvements, rights-of-way corridors
- Determine existing uses
- Determine visual resource management classes
- Identify wildlife habitat conflict areas
- Locate threatened or endangered plants or animals
- Identify any special designation or sensitive areas
- Map favorable formations
- Identify any access, hazard or fire problem areas
- Determine socio-economic conditions and trends
- Determine areas with commercial potential for energy minerals (oil and gas)
- Determine those areas which could be developed or explored with appropriate restrictions

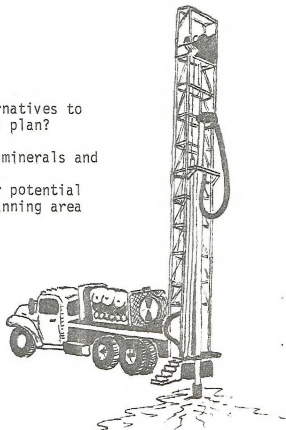
What should be measured in estimating the effects that various alternatives would have on the environment?

- Social values and beliefs
- Demographics (population)
- Split estates
- Local, regional and national economy
- Groups dependent on public land
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Watershed (soils)
- Noise levels
- Existing improvements
- Existing use patterns
- Visual resources
- Wildlife
- Plant communities

What factors should be considered in evaluating alternatives to select a preferred alternative and eventually a final plan?

- To lease all areas having potential for energy minerals and potential for development
- To permit maximum exploration opportunities for potential discovery of minerals in all parts of the planning area in the least confining manner possible

Comments or Suggestions:



# SUMMARY

After extensive public involvement, and upon completion of this plan in 1984, the issues we hope to reach decisions on are:

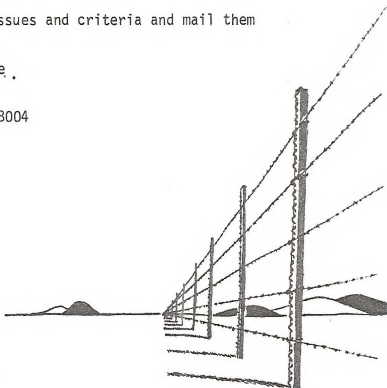
1. Proper allocation of forage for livestock, wildlife and watershed and setting of objectives for future management of selected allotments
2. Recommendation of suitability or non-suitability for wilderness designation of the 15 Wilderness Study Areas
3. Close or limit off road vehicle use on areas with sensitive resource values and designate selected areas where such use can occur
4. Maintain or enhance important wildlife habitat areas with emphasis on big game
5. Insure access to public lands having important resource or recreation values
6. Provide for orderly exploration and development of energy minerals while holding down the environmental impacts to a practical level

We would like to know whether you concur or disagree with this list of issues, and to consider issues you wish to add. Please recognize that there may be many other subjects identified as important issues by other people with a wide variety of interests. With the help of our District Advisory Council we will sort through these to select the issues that appear to be the most important. We hope you will take the time to comment on these issues.

We also hope you will reread the planning criteria section proposed in this booklet and comment on it also.

Please write your comments about these issues and criteria and mail them to:

Las Cruces District Office,  
Bureau of Land Management  
P. O. Box 1420  
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88004



## HOW TO COMMENT

If you would prefer to comment in person, come to our office at 1705 North Valley Drive in Las Cruces or attend one of the following workshops.

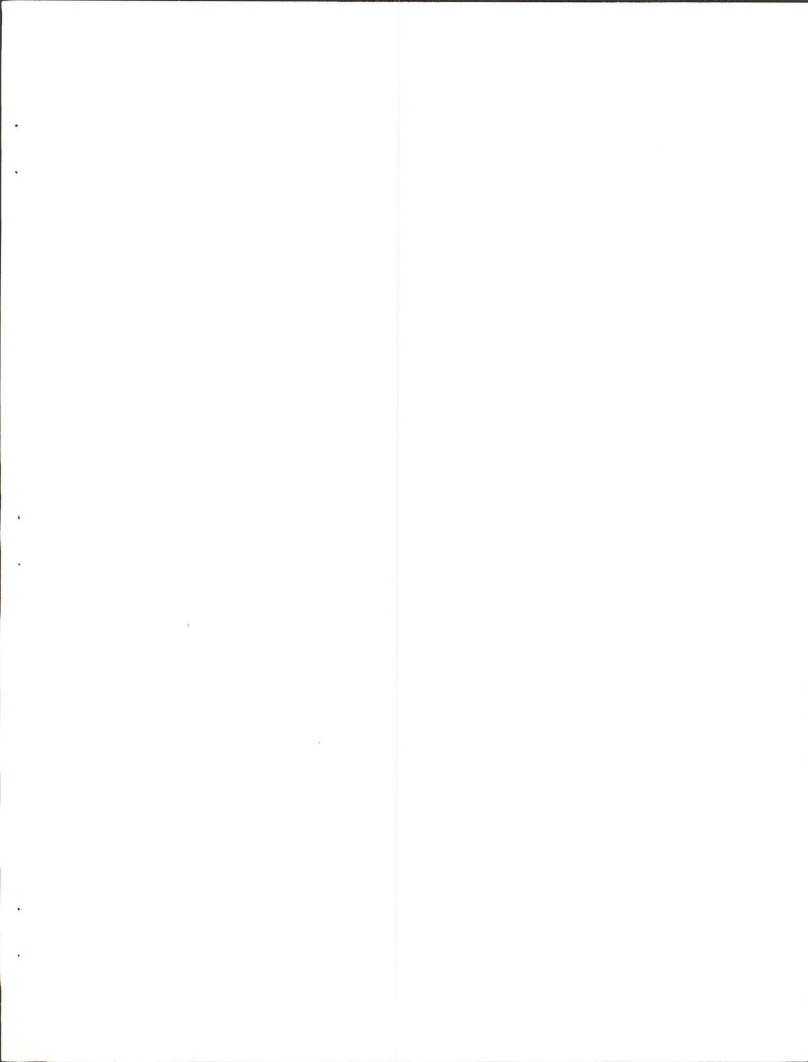
Workshops will be held at the following locations:

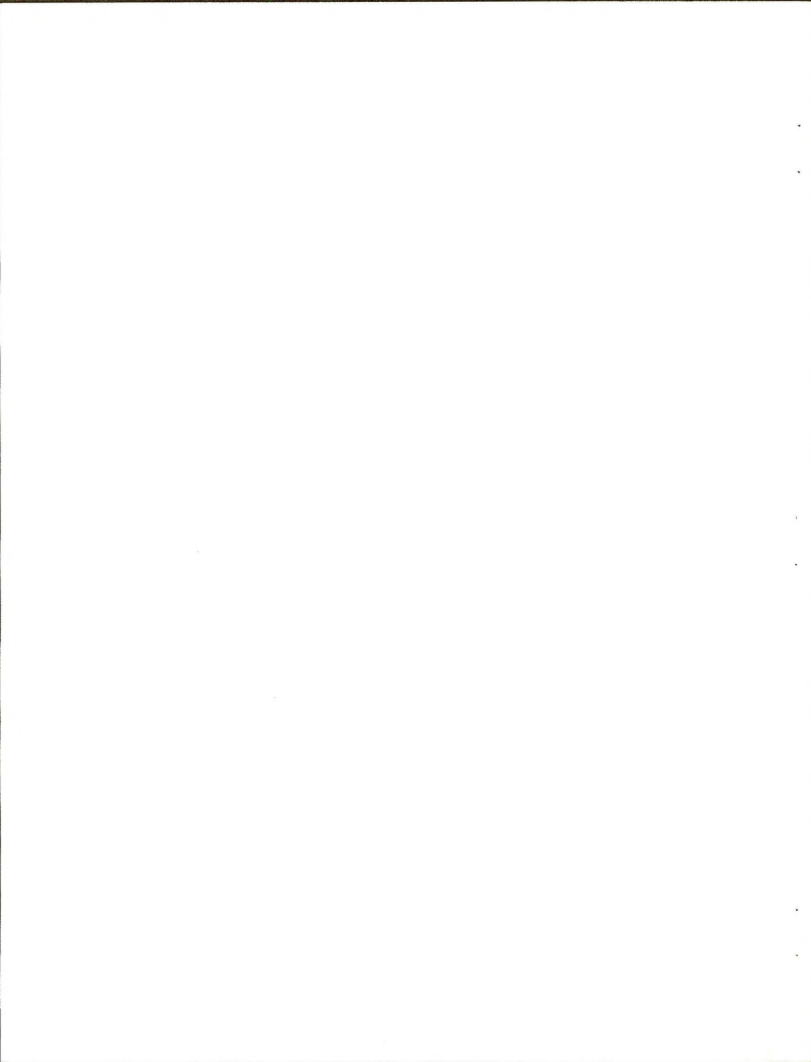
April 8, 1981	Lordsburg Civic Center	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
April 15, 1981	Las Cruces Branigan Library (Room A)	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
April 22, 1981	Silver City Public Safety Building 1100 N. Hudson	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
April 29, 1981	Deming Morgan Hall 109 E. Pine	4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

To be most useful, your comments should be received by April 30 1981. If you are not interested in participating in this planning effort or do not wish to receive further information please let us know and we will remove your name from our mailing list.

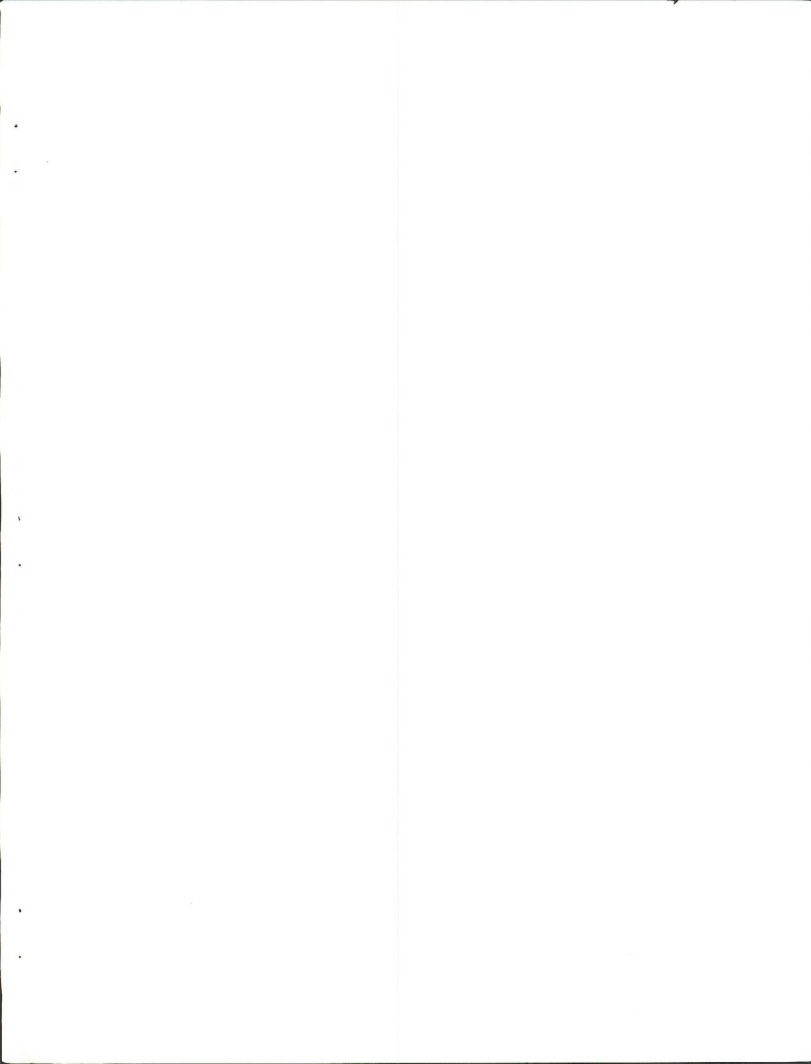
If you have questions about planning or need help with this booklet please contact Bill Harkenrider, Las Cruces/Lordsburg Area Manager, at the above address or by telephone at (505) 523-5571.

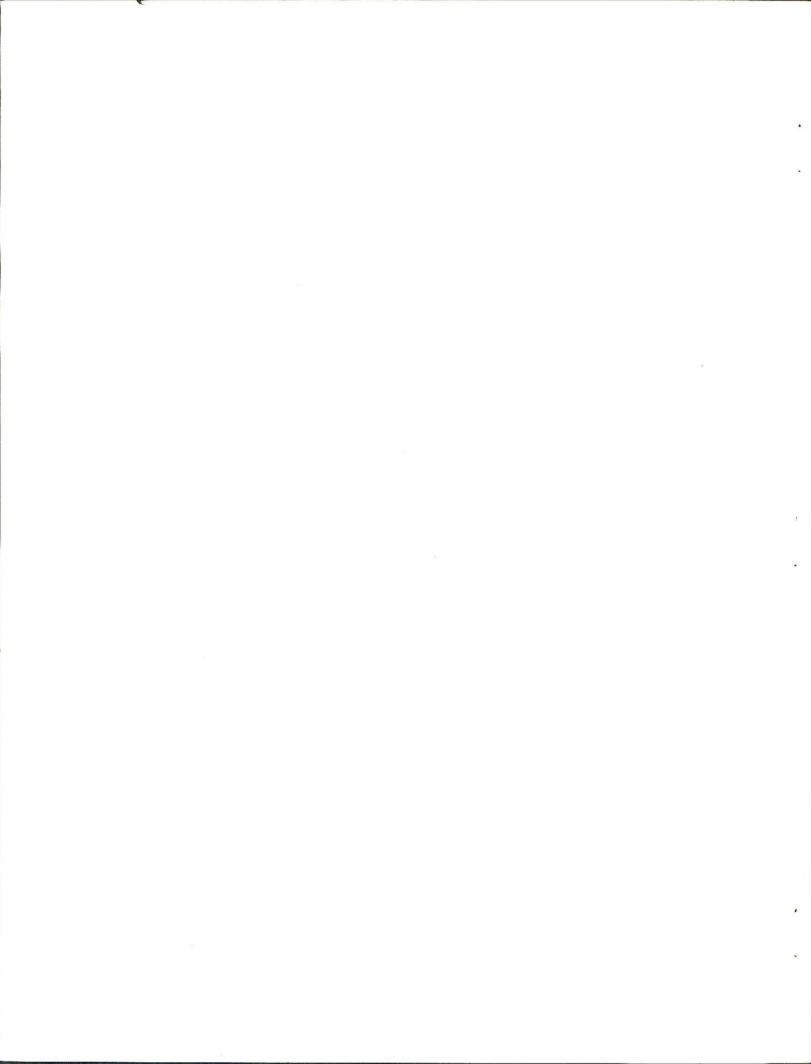












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